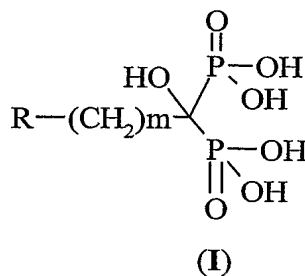


**CLAIMS**

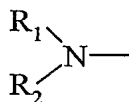
1. A process for the preparation of diphosphonic acids of the general formula (I)



wherein

m is an integer from 1 to 8 and

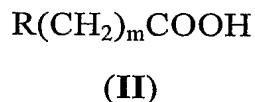
R is a residue of formula



wherein R<sub>1</sub> and R<sub>2</sub> are independently selected from hydrogen or C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>5</sub>alkyl, or

R is a 5- or 6 membered aromatic ring, optionally containing one or more heteroatoms selected from N, O, S,

by reaction of a carboxylic acid of the general formula (II)



wherein R and m are as defined above,

with a mixture of phosphorous acid and phosphorus oxychloride, in the absence of solvents and with a carboxylic acid: phosphorus oxychloride: phosphorous acid molar ratio of 1:2-4:8-12.

2. The process according to claim 1 wherein the carboxylic acid:phosphorus oxychloride: phosphorous acid molar ratio is 1:3:10.

3. The process according to claim 1 or 2 for the preparation of

diphosphonic acids wherein R is imidazolyl or pyridyl.

4. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 3 for the preparation of a diphosphonic acid selected from: ibandronic, risedronic and zoledronic acid.
5. Ibandronic acid monosodium salt in the amorphous form.
- 5 6. Salt according to claim 1 with a water content lower than 2% by weight.
7. Pharmaceutical compositions containing the salt of claims 5 or 6 in admixture with suitable excipients.
8. Process for the preparation of the salt of claims 5 or 6 comprising the salification of ibandronic acid with sodium hydroxide, carbonate or
- 10 bicarbonate in an aqueous solution, followed by lyophilization or "spray-drying" of the resulting aqueous solution.